

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MONROV 02571 141659Z

61

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 IO-13 DODE-00 PA-02 USIA-15

PRS-01 SP-02 /069 W

----- 065376

R 141615Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9768

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

UNCLAS MONROVIA 2571

EO 11652:N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PORG, AF, LI

SUBJ: ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN TRADE UNION UNITY (OATUU) APRIL
CONGRESS

REF: STATE 78514

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH LIBERIAN UNION LEADERSHIP IS SYMPATHETIC TO
TUNISIAN CALL FOR BOYCOTT OF OATUU CONGRESS, LIBERIA WILL BE
REPRESENTED AT TRIPOLI CONGRESS. RIVAL LIBERIAN LABOR FEDERATIONS
ARE MORE CONCERNED WITH THEIR RELATIVE STANDINGS IN OATUU THAN
WITH TUNISIAN-LIBYAN DISPUTE. END SUMMARY.

1. LIBERIAN REPRESENTATIVES WILL ATTEND OATUU APRIL CONFERENCE IN
TRIPOLI IN SPITE OF LETTER FROM GENERAL FEDERATION OF TUNISIAN
WORKERS (UGTT) URGING BOYCOTT. DELEGATION WILL CONSIST OF:
AMOS GRAY, SECRETARY-GENERAL, CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZAT-
KONS (CIO); JAMES BASS, MEMBER, CIO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE; FRANK
WALKER, SECRETARY-GENERAL, UNITED WORKERS CONGRESS (UWC); AND
ESMAEL SHERIF, ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL UWC.

2. CIO AND UWC, AS TWO RIVAL LIBERIAN LABOR FEDERATIONS, ARE MORE
CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR RELATIVE STANDINGS IN OATUU THAN TUNISIAN-
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PAGE 02 MONROV 02571 141659Z

LIBYAN DISPUTE. CIO FEELS THAT ITS RIGHTS AS OATUU CHARGER MEMBER

ARE INFRINGED UPON BY INVITATION OF RIVAL UWC TO CONGRESS. CIO FEARS THAT IT WILL BE REDUCED TO ADVISOR STATUS (AS AT LAST YEAR'S ILO MEETING), LOSING YET ANOTHER CLAIM TO LEADERSHIP OF LIBERIAN LABOR.

3. OATUU SECRETARY-GENERAL DENIS AKUMU VISITED MONROVIA LATE MARCH URGING UWC-CIO MERGER. AT THAT TIME HE PERSUADED RELUCTANT GRAY TO ACCEPT ONE UWC REPRESENTATIVE AT OATUU CONGRESS. CIO WAS TO HAVE THREE REPRESENTATIVES. GRAY FEELS PERSONALLY BETRAYED BY AKUMU NOW THAT HE HAS RECEIVED ONLY TWO INVITATIONS. UWC HAS ALSO RECEIVED INVITATIONS FOR TWO DELEGATES.

4. UWC SEES ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCE AS FURTHER RECOGNITION OF THEIR PREEMINENCE IN LIBERIAN LABOR MOVEMENT. WALKER AND SHERIF HOPE UWC, AS REPRESENTATIVE OF LARGEST LABOR FEDERATION IN COUNTRY, WILL BE NAMED SINGLE LIBERIAN MEMBER IN OATUU. FOR THIS REASON, UWC WILL ATTEMPT TO OFFEND NO ONE, ARGUING THAT AS NEW MEMBER, UWC SHOULD NOT YET TAKE SIDES IN TUNISIAN-LIBYAN DISPUTE. UWC IS, HOWEVER, NOT SYMPATHETIC TO INCLUSION IN AGENDA OF ARAB/ NON-LABOR ISSUES. UWC LEADERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY WILL SUPPORT REELECTION OF AKUMU TO SECRETARY-GENERAL.

5. CIO IS CLEARLY SYMPATHETIC TO TUNISIAN LEADERSHIP. GRAY INDICATES HE WILL SUPPORT HAIBIB BARCHAU, TUNISIAN CANDIDATE FOR SECRETARY-GENERAL OR AN ALTERNATIVE ICFTU AFRICAN CANDIDATE. SHOULD TUNIS BOYCOTT CONGRESS, GRAY HAS SUGGESTED THAT CIO MAY, AFTER ARRIVAL TRIPOLI, JOIN OTHERS IN BOYCOTT IF TO DO SO WOULD BLOCK ACHIEVEMENT OF NECESSARY QUORUM. STRATEGY WILL BE WORKED OUT AT ICFTU PRE-CONGRESS MEETING IN ROME.

6. TEXT OF UGTT LETTER IS NOT AVAILABLE. RECENT CABLE FROM AKUMU URGING ATTENDANCE AND ABOVE REASONS HAVE PERSUADED LIBERIAN UNIONS TO ATTEND OATUU CONGRESS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, BOYCOTTS, DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MONROV02571
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760142-0246
From: MONROVIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760463/aaaacbef.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 78514
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: oatisao
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 JUN 2004 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <02 SEP 2004 by oatisao>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN TRADE UNION UNITY (OATUU) APRIL CONGRESS
TAGS: ELAB, PORG, AF, LI, OATUU, (AKUMU, DENIS), (GRAY, AMOS)
To: STATE TUNIS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006